

**Opening Statement  
Chairman Mark Souder**

**“Threat Convergence Along the Border: How Does Drug Trafficking Impact  
Our Borders?”**

**Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy  
And Human Resources  
Committee on Government Reform**

**June 14, 2005**

Good afternoon and thank you all for coming. Today we will explore federal law enforcement’s ability to identify, interdict, and apprehend drug smuggling operations along our nation’s borders. This mission requires a comprehensive, unified, multi-agency effort, with a clear plan that dismantles the organizations responsible not just for smuggling drugs, but also illegal aliens, terrorists, and weapons into this country. We have fallen short of this objective for many reasons, but I would like to address five of them here.

Reason number one involves the organizational decision to split the investigative and inspection functions at Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE). By splitting the two functions the Department has limited their capability to conduct enforcement operations in areas leading up to the border, at the border, and beyond the border. This unhealthy split has been exasperated by an extra layer of bureaucracy over ICE and CBP, namely the Directorate of Border and Transportation Security.

Second it seems that all federal agencies engaged in drug enforcement have developed, or are in the process of developing, their own individual intelligence programs, complete with intel centers that serve that agency’s needs. While I support intel operations at these agencies, too many centers leads to duplication of effort and stovepiped computer systems that lack the ability to communicate with other existing systems.

One example of this type of duplicative efforts can be found at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas. The Border Patrol Field Intelligence Center (BORFIC), and the DEA run El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), have both taken up residence at the same military installation. BORFIC is responsible for providing daily reports to Border Patrol Headquarters and field managers throughout the U.S. Additionally, they search for potential terrorist threats along the Mexican/U.S. border. EPIC, on the other hand, concentrates primarily on drug movement and immigration violations to include all of the United States and the Western Hemisphere where drug and alien movements are directed toward the United States. While both focus on similar targets, they have developed separate databases of violators rather than sharing the information and making it available to users from one central database.

Third, we lack a strategic, comprehensive, layered, interagency plan to address border security. The DHS Undersecretary for Border and Transportation Security (BTS) is currently evaluating the merits of a border strategy that will involve the opening of yet another operational and intelligence center called the Border Interdiction Support Center (BISC). The BISC concept would supposedly warehouse and disseminate the intelligence derived from the interagency efforts at interdicting people, weapons, and narcotics along the southwest border. But, the agencies that would be involved in the BISC – like DEA, ICE, and CBP all seem to have a different idea of what the BISC would do.

The perceived need create the BISC underscores the nation's lack of a coherent, interagency plan to address border security. On May 12, 2005, the Government Reform Committee held a hearing to examine DHS management of border security. Commissioner Bonner informed the Committee that CBP has a Strategic Border Patrol Plan, but failed to disclose the details of a border strategy. The Subcommittee has been told that a border plan has been submitted by CBP, but is now held up at BTS. We need to do better.

Fourth, DHS has failed to fund the Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement as Congress intended. Currently, the funding level for 2006 remains the same as 2005, funds are controlled by the chief of staff, not the director, and the Director continues to be employed by the Transportation Security Agency. The Office is supposed to coordinate DHS drug interdiction efforts at the land borders, on the seas, and in the air. The law assigns specific responsibilities to the new Director, including oversight of DHS counterdrug activities and the submission of reports to Congress. Without sufficient funds and independence, however, the Office simply cannot carry out those responsibilities.

Finally, poor organizational structure and funding, lack of intelligence coordination, and a cohesive border strategy have not only hurt our ability to stop drug smuggling along the border, but also the smuggling of people, terrorists and weapons. Our failure to identify and prosecute transportation groups that provide aliens with the tools needed to illegally enter our country calls into question our ability to control the nation's borders. It is my hope that Congress and the federal law enforcement agencies will work to improve our ability to shut down the smuggling organizations involved in criminal enterprises along the border.

Today we have a panel of very experienced witnesses to help answer these and other questions posed by the Subcommittee. From the Office of Counter Narcotics Enforcement we have the Director, Admiral Ralph Utley, from the Drug Enforcement Administration we have the Assistant Administrator for Intelligence, Mr. Anthony Placido, from Customs and Border Protection we have the Director of the office of drug interdiction, Mr. Gregory Passic, and from Immigration and Customs Enforcement we have the Deputy Assistant Director of the Office of Investigations, Mr. John Torres. We look forward to your testimony and insight into this important issue.